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Environmental Marketing Claims

- What does it mean?
- How do I prove it?
- Is it really a good thing?

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Environmental Claims

- Degradable (more than one kind)
- Compostable
- Recyclable
- Recycled Content



How many kinds of “degradable” are there?

- Degradable = material undergoes a significant change resulting in a loss of some properties
- Biodegradable = organic material is broken down by living organisms. Material can be degraded aerobically, with oxygen, or anaerobically, without oxygen
- Photodegradable = material undergoes a significant change as the result of exposure to light, resulting in a loss of some properties
- Oxodegradable = material undergoes a significant change as the result of exposure to oxygen, resulting in a loss of some properties



Do “*biodegradable*” and “*compostable*” mean the same thing?

- No
- Compost is the result of bacterial decomposition, in the presence of oxygen, at a reasonable rate of decomposition (usually 90 days or less), leaving no toxic residue.
- Air, water, the right feedstock and temperature are required.
- There are multiple composting methods, each with it's own requirements:
 - Backyard or Onsite Composting
 - Vermicomposting
 - Aerated (Turned) Windrow Composting
 - Aerated Static Pile Composting
 - In-vessel Composting
- Composting does not take place in a landfill!



What does happen in a landfill?

- Most landfills are fundamentally anaerobic
- Any biodegradation that takes place in a landfill does so very slowly, and produces methane



How Do I Substantiate the Claim of *Degradability* or *Compostability*?

➤ Standards

- ASTM D6954 - 04 Standard Guide for Exposing and Testing Plastics that Degrade in the Environment by a Combination of Oxidation and Biodegradation
- ASTM D5272 - 08 Standard Practice for Outdoor Exposure Testing of Photodegradable Plastics
- ASTM D5338 - 98(2003) Standard Test Method for Determining Aerobic Biodegradation of Plastic Materials Under Controlled Composting Conditions
- ASTM D5526-94(2002) Standard Test Method for Determining Anaerobic Biodegradation of Plastic Materials Under Accelerated Landfill Conditions
- ASTM D6400-04 Standard Specification for Compostable Plastics Standard
- EN 13432 and EN 14995 – Proof of compostability of plastic products
- EN 14046:2003 - Evaluation of the ultimate aerobic biodegradability of packaging materials under controlled composting conditions - Method by analysis of released carbon dioxide
- ISO 15985:2004 - Determination of the ultimate anaerobic biodegradation and disintegration under high-solids anaerobic-digestion conditions -- Method by analysis of released biogas



There's lots more.....

What Does *Recyclable* Mean?

-can be collected, separated or otherwise recovered from the solid waste stream for reuse, or in the manufacture or assembly of another package or product, *through an established recycling program.*
- Claims of recyclability should be qualified to the extent necessary to avoid consumer deception about any limited availability of recycling programs and collection sites.



How Do I Substantiate the Claim of *Recyclability*?

➤ Empirical Data

- Representative sampling
- Real-world conditions
- Time sensitive analysis
- Historical data

➤ Public and/or private databases

- Trade association studies (e.g., AF&PA)
- Earth 911.com
- Biocycle

➤ Remember – collection programs are dynamic



What Does *Recycled Content* Mean?

- materials that have been recovered or otherwise diverted from the solid waste stream, either during the manufacturing process (pre-consumer), or after consumer use (post-consumer)



What do *Pre-* and *Post-consumer* Mean?

- *Preconsumer waste* is considered “recycled” if the material is diverted from the waste stream during a manufacturing process. Excluded is reutilization of materials such as rework, regrind or scrap generated in a process and capable of being reclaimed within the same process that generated it.
- *Postconsumer material* is generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end-users of the product, which can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain.

ISO 14021:1999(E) Environmental labels and declarations – self-declared environmental claims: 7.8.1.1.



Be clear about how you are defining your terms

How Do I Substantiate the Claim of *Recycled Content*?

- For products or packages that are only partially made of recycled material, a recycled claim should be adequately qualified to avoid consumer deception about **the amount, by weight**, of recycled content in the finished product or package.
- Use Your Purchasing Records
 - What did you buy?
 - How much did you buy?
 - What did you make out of it?



How Do I Substantiate Claims of Incremental Benefit?

- Comparative claims that can be quantified include larger/smaller, more/less
 - Purchasing or manufacturing records
 - Historical data
- Comparative claims that can NOT be quantified include words like “better” & “most”



Do these words imply an environmental benefit?

Is the benefit meaningful?

- Natural (arsenic and botulism are natural, but I don't want to eat or wear them)
- Greener (green is a color, not an environmental attribute)
- Eco-friendly (earth friendly, environmentally friendly – maybe we shouldn't make friendly claims)



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